

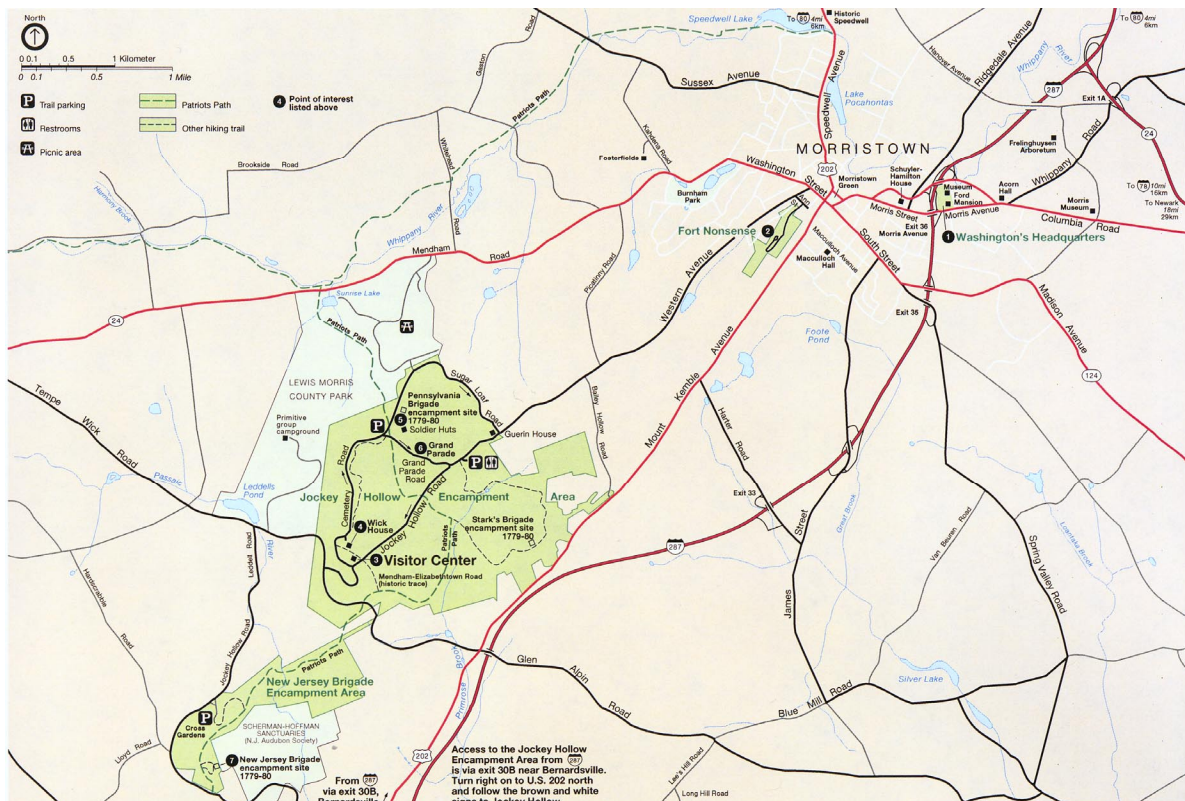
# Report

## Morristown National Historical Park

### 1.0 Site Description

Morristown National Historical Park (NHP) preserves sites in the Morristown, New Jersey area occupied by General George Washington and the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. The park encompasses just under 1,700 acres of land in four non-contiguous sections spread 15 miles apart. Sites include the Jacob Ford Mansion and Fort Nonsense, both of which are situated within the downtown area of Morristown. The park features two Visitor Centers, with one at the Museum at Washington's Headquarters and the second at Jockey Hollow, which is one of two encampment areas (the second is the New Jersey Brigade Encampment). The encampment areas are both located approximately four to five miles southwest of the center of Morristown. No ATS exists at present, either within or between the various sites. The main access roads to the park are often heavily congested, particularly during the morning and evening commutes.

Adjacent park resources include Lewis Morris County Park, the Sherman-Hoffman Audubon Sanctuary, and the Great Swamp National Wildlife Sanctuary approximately eight miles from Jockey Hollow.



Morristown is a bustling community situated approximately 30 miles east of New York. Residential and commercial development has expanded considerably in recent years; Morristown is home to a number of large companies, including Lucent Technologies, AT&T, Pfizer, Honeywell, and GPU, Inc. The construction of eight million square feet of office space has been approved or is underway within a 10-mile radius of Morristown. In the next 10 years, the population of Morris County is expected to increase substantially. This growth is due not only to the U.S. economic boom of the 1990s, but to the introduction, in 1996, of direct Morristown – New York City regional rail service, operated by New Jersey Transit. A new parking garage and residential towers are being built near the train station to accommodate the increased demand that faster rail service has engendered.

In addition to its role as a site that is valuable historical land, the open spaces are important recreational resources for area residents and are perceived as key open space by local planning authorities. Area residents use the facilities on a regular basis, frequently using up available parking spaces in order to exercise on park trails. While the use of this historical park for recreational purposes is likely to continue, such use impacts the experience of non-recreational visitors. Increasing options for alternatives to the automobile would enhance the experience of all users.

The park's 1976 Master Plan foresaw the need for an intrapark transportation system, specifically a shuttle bus to carry visitors within the 1,320-acre Jockey Hollow site. Although much of the system was constructed, including a one-way tour road, central parking, a remote comfort station, and several waysides, the project never came to fruition. As traffic congestion in Morristown has worsened, the park visitor's experience has progressively degraded. Depending on traffic conditions, it can take more than an hour to travel the approximately 15 miles between Washington's headquarters and Jockey Hollow. Half the trip is typically spent on Interstate 287, an eight-lane highway that often carries heavy commuter and truck traffic. The drive from Washington's headquarters to Fort Nonsense, although just over a mile, can also frustrate out-of-town tourists, who must negotiate several tricky merges, left turns, and U-turns in heavy traffic. Pedestrian access to Fort Nonsense is complicated by the lack of continuous sidewalks and the need to cross the I-287 overpass and a railroad underpass.

As a result, park officials believe that some visitors are deterred from visiting multiple sections of the park, either because they lose their way or because they discover other leisure and entertainment activities en route. Moreover, viewing the park by private automobile breaks the interpretive experience because it forces visitors to negotiate unfamiliar roads, search for parking, walk to the next attraction, return to their car, and repeat the process. Visitors also fail to see the geographic and topographic relationship between the encampment sites, Fort Nonsense, and Washington's headquarters, especially when they travel between the sites on I-287. The relationship of the sites was carefully planned in 1779 but traffic and urbanization are taking their toll.

## ■ 2.0 Existing ATS

Several park sites are accessible by regional rail service. Specifically, the Ford Mansion, Washington's headquarters, and Fort Nonsense (across the street from historic Morristown Green) are less than a mile from the Morristown train station. The more distant encampment areas, in contrast, do not benefit from rail access and are too far for the average visitor to reach on foot. These areas are only accessible by automobile, tour bus, or bicycle. Bicycle travel and hiking are important in the Morristown area, with several long-distance trails and routes connecting important regional resources.

## ■ 3.0 ATS Needs

In order to fulfill the legislative mandate to manage the park as an historical area, and accommodate local recreation, it is highly desirable to be able to provide multiple modes of transportation for visitors and local users to the various units of the park. An Alternative Transportation System (ATS) would reduce inner park traffic and improve the experience of all visitors. It would also unify the park visit experience which is presently fragmented by driving from place to place.

Three types of ATS needs are worth further exploration at the park, including: 1) shuttle bus services; 2) bicycle facilities; and 3) traffic calming. Of these, park officials identify bus service as the most pressing need. They have expressed interest in operating a shuttle bus in partnership with the local community and with corporate sponsorship. Service would serve three groups of people: park visitors arriving by rail who wish to see the encampment areas; park visitors arriving by private automobile who desire guided tours of the sites without the hassles of driving; and employees of companies located in the area who desire alternative means of reaching their workplaces.

## ■ 4.0 Basis of ATS Needs

**Shuttle** – Park officials believe that the attractiveness of shuttle bus services in Morristown NHP and the community has increased as the result of improved rail access. Until recently, rail travel between New York City and Morristown required a change of trains in Hoboken and took approximately 1:40. In 1996, direct service was introduced, cutting travel to around one hour. Today, 23 roundtrips are scheduled on weekdays, the last train departing Morristown at 9:30 p.m., and 19 on Saturdays and Sundays, with the last departing after midnight. The convenience and frequency of rail service has caused ridership to more than double on the Morristown line, from 5,000 riders each day each way in FY 1996 to 10,800 in FY 2000. Overall passenger boardings at Morristown average 1,849 a day, making it the third busiest station on the Morristown line.

It would be desirable for buses to circulate between the Morristown train station and Jockey Hollow, using historic Route 202 (Mount Kemble Avenue), Jockey Hollow Road, Patriots Path, and Route 24 (Mendham Road), where AT&T and other corporations are located. The service would be free for park visitors, or, more precisely, service would be included in the park entrance fee (currently \$4.00). Stops at other attractions in Morristown (Morris Museum, Historic Speedwell, and Macculloch Hall) would likely further increase tourist ridership. Stops at the companies located along Route 24 would ensure that adequate ridership levels were maintained throughout the day and help make the service financially viable.

The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) has recently designated Morristown Village as a transit village such that improvements to the transit services in the area may be eligible for alternative sources of funds. Morristown Village would serve as an excellent hub for the ATS service, which could have considerable ability to address a range of transportation needs for the community. A proposal for an ATS feasibility study enjoys wide support among Morristown civic, business, and tourist organizations. These include Historic Morristown Visitor Center, Morris Country RIDES, Morris Country Parks Division, New Jersey Audubon Society, North Jersey Transit, and the Morris Country Department of Transportation.

**Bicycles** – At present, there are no bicycle parking resources at several of the sites. It will be desirable to provide bicycle parking at all of the sites.

**Traffic Calming** – For park sites located in developed suburban areas, the presence of commuter through traffic is a constant concern. Unchecked, there is a legitimate concern about the impact of continued growth on park resources. A study of these potential impacts may be warranted, and perhaps the implementation of traffic calming measures can be pursued.

## ■ 5.0 Persons Interviewed

Michael D. Henderson, Morristown National Historical Park, January 8, 2001.

Al Tillotson, New Jersey Transit, January 9, 2001.